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MEMOIR OF THE HON. H. F. DORMER.





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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF THE

HON. HENRY EDWARD DORMER,

LATE OF THE 60TH RIFLES.

R. I. P.



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A FEW copies of the following little Memoir were printed soon after the decease of its lamented subject, for private distribution among friends. It is now published, with a few additions, in compliance with the wishes of several persons who believed it calculated to edify general readers, and to encourage many souls surrounded by the difficulties and hindrances of social position to enter on the practices of an earnest Christian life. It will, of course, be understood that the word *Saint*, which occurs in some of the letters and

notices quoted in the Memoir, has been retained only as expressing the high esteem felt for the departed by all among whom his last days had been spent ; and the same explanation will apply to the allusion to other marks of respect evinced by the poor, by whom he was so much beloved.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR.



THE Honourable HENRY EDWARD DORMER, youngest son of Joseph Thaddeus, eleventh Baron Dormer, and of his wife, Eliza Anne Tichborne, daughter of Sir Henry Joseph Tichborne, Bart., was born at Grove Park, in the county of Warwick, November 29th, 1844. His early school-days were passed at St. Mary's College, Oscott, where he made his first Communion, and where he remained till his twelfth year, when being obliged to leave in consequence of severe illness, he joined his family, and continued his education under private tutors in Belgium and Germany, at Grove Park, and London, until the year 1861, when he returned for a second time to Oscott. At a later period

of his life he expressed his sense of gratitude for the blessing of having passed so long a period of his youth in his own family, which strengthened domestic ties, and introduced him into society under restraints which would not otherwise have been felt, and where at the same time he had the happiness of being under the same roof with the Blessed Sacrament.* He had a great taste for study, and much musical talent, and was fond of natural history, and other kindred pursuits. In his boyhood he was considered high-spirited, but always charitable and warm-hearted, and disposed to be religious. His early inclinations pointed to the sea, but he finally decided on studying for the army, and on leaving Oscott in 1862, he prepared for the necessary examination under a tutor in London.

* MS. Notes.

The impression left on the minds of his superiors by their intercourse with him at Oscott, was that his real vocation was for the priesthood. He did not appear to be in any way conscious of this, and his humble judgment of himself, joined to a very strong sense of the responsibility of the priestly office, probably prevented him from entertaining such a thought. Nevertheless, the secret bias of his soul was very clearly manifested on the occasion of his sister embracing the religious state in the Convent of St. Dominic, at Stone; an event, which far from causing him any regrets, elicited from him repeated expressions of pleasure and sympathy, indicating how thoroughly he appreciated the privilege and happiness of a religious vocation. By this event also, he was brought into closer relations with the Dominican order, which was afterwards to

exercise so important an influence over his life. His first acquaintance with that order, and one which, as he writes, "laid in his heart a foundation of love for it,"* must be dated from the Retreat which was given at Oscott in the summer of 1862, by the Rev. Father Rodolph Suffield, O. S. D. It was renewed and strengthened by his visits to the convent, and the regular correspondence which he maintained with his sister up to the time of his death.

On the 17th November, 1863, he was gazetted to a commission in the 60th Regiment (Rifles), and a little later joined the Depôt at Winchester. During the period that elapsed before his departure for Canada, he more than once visited Ireland, and entered heartily into the amusements of the society among which he was thrown. In fact, whatever may

* MS. Notes.

have been the indications which induced his Directors to believe in the existence of a latent vocation to the ecclesiastical state, they did not consist in any disrelish for the world. He appears to have had a facility for attracting the interest and affection of a large circle of friends singular in so young a man ; and his letters, written at this period, abound with descriptions of the various enjoyments in which he took part, expressed in the tone of buoyant spirits natural to youth. One of the elder officers of his regiment speaks of him, during his stay at Winchester, as "a gay cheerful youth," adding, "a smarter and more promising young officer I never saw."

He was ordered to Canada to join his battalion in the January of 1866. Circumstances occurred about this period of his life, which, while they resulted in much

pain and disappointment at the time, were the means used by Divine Providence to detach his heart from those worldly enjoyments which had sometimes induced a partial neglect of his religious duties. From this time he seems to have turned the full current of his warm and strong affections upon Almighty God, and the happiness consequent on this prevented the earthly trial from leaving the slightest trace of bitterness on his soul.

Previous to leaving England, however, he paid a farewell visit to his sister at St. Dominic's Convent, and took the occasion of devoutly approaching the Sacraments, as a preparation for the new career on which he was entering. That a very deep religious impression was left on his soul at this time is evident from more than one passage in his letters, and it appears that an indistinct sense of his religious vocation

had then for the first time dawned upon him. "When I left England," he writes to his brother, "I started fortified with the Sacraments, and with the intention of leading as good a life as I could, but with no immediate purpose of abandoning the world."* In another letter to his sister, however, he is more explicit. "From the moment I left Stone," he says, "after having had the inestimable blessing of making my peace with God, I have had a kind of resolution in my mind to abandon the world, and join a religious order."†

Shortly before leaving England, he made arrangements for supporting a little orphan boy at St. Vincent's Orphanage, requesting, however, that this act of charity might not be divulged to his

* MS. Correspondence.

† Correspondence, September 6, 1866.

friends; and in his letters to his sister he did not forget from time to time to inquire after the progress of his little protégé.

This half-conscious attraction to the religious state, and to the Dominican order, which he considered to have already been twice made an instrument to him of spiritual good, was increased when on his arrival at London, in West Canada, where his battalion was stationed, he found that the Catholic church of that town was served by the Dominican fathers, a circumstance the more remarkable as it was the only station belonging to the order in Canada. He did not fail to communicate the fact to his sister in the first letter written after his arrival, and to express the satisfaction which it gave him to renew his relations with the fathers of the same order to which he already felt himself in some

sort united;* and he at once placed himself under their direction. But although it might be gathered from his correspondence that he was heartily persevering in the resolution expressed in his letter to his brother of "leading as good a life as he could," there was for some time nothing to indicate to his friends in England the rapid and remarkable change which soon began to manifest itself in his interior. We gather, indeed, from his manuscript notes that even before he embraced that austere rule of self-discipline to which he adhered during the latter months of his life he had been gradually adopting the practice of mortification and self-examination. Mingled with regulations for private study and other notes on indifferent subjects, appear

* Speaking of the Oscott Retreat, he calls it "the first link that bound me to the Holy Order of St. Dominic." MS. Notes.

pencilled resolutions to "give ten shillings a month in alms," "not to allow lounging or love of society to interfere with duty," "to avoid cursing, and specially the profane use of the Holy Name, and to give sixpence to the poor at each fall;" "to keep silence during immodest conversation, and endeavour goodhumouredly to change the subject; and above all to be consistent on this point, never yielding through a feeling of human respect:" and together with these appear notes like the following: "Something is due on Sundays besides hearing Mass; resist apathy and irreligious thoughts; guard against a lazy mind mortify yourself once a week besides Friday."

Still there were no signs of his having as yet contemplated exchanging a secular for a religious calling, or of any disposition to withdraw from the ordinary way of life

led by those around him. His brother officers, indeed, noticed as somewhat singular that he declined availing himself of their offered introductions to the resident families of London ; but he appeared to take his usual interest in his military duties, and in his favourite pursuits, such as the shooting and preserving some of the beautiful migrant birds which annually arrive in Canada during the spring. A friend who occasionally accompanied him in his expeditions to the woods, observed that he always evinced a solicitude to avoid killing more than a single specimen of each species, and that he shrank from anything like a wanton destruction of their innocent lives ; a trait which, however trifling, was only characteristic of that kindness of heart which distinguished him on all occasions.

Gradually, however, he lost his accus-

tomed interest in these occupations, and began to withdraw from the society of his brother officers, to redouble his religious exercises, and to devote a great part of his time to attendance in the hospital, visiting the sick poor, and the instruction of the Catholic soldiers of his regiment. The first letter addressed to his sister which gave any idea of the decided change which had manifested itself in his life, is dated May 9th. In it he congratulates himself on his singular good fortune in finding himself in a battalion where not the smallest molestation was offered to him, in the practice of his religious duties, on the part of his brother officers. He alludes to his occupation among the soldiers, regretting that he is able to do so little good among them, but expressing himself in a manner that conveyed a very imperfect idea of the amount of good

which he was really effecting ; and at the desire of his director, he communicates to her his ordinary rule of life, from which it appears that even then he was in the habit of spending three hours in prayer every morning, of joining in the month of May devotions which took place at noon, of visiting the Blessed Sacrament again every day at three, after which he paid his visits to the hospital or to the poor, and at 6½ joined the Confraternity of Mount Carmel, which he calls "an admirable institution for keeping the Catholic soldiers straight," and which assembled in the Church every evening for the recitation of the Rosary and night prayers in common.

"Once a week," he continues, "I go to Holy Communion, as well as on all Feasts of the Dominican Order. I cannot describe to you how easy Almighty God has made this life to me. It really seems as

if I were following only the natural bent of my inclinations. I trust He will preserve me from ever finding it irksome or tedious, or even if it should become so for a time, that I may have the grace to persevere in it."

In his next letter, dated June 28th, he describes more fully the way of life he had adopted, though, as will hereafter be perceived, the details thus afforded were very far from revealing the real state of the case. "I have the greatest faith in the beautiful doctrine of the Communion of Saints; indeed, I feel, and almost know, that to the efficacy of others' prayers I am indebted to our beloved Lord for His mercies so infinitely, so gratuitously accorded, and so constantly multiplied. Every hour He is bestowing some fresh bounty upon me, and making me feel that to serve Him is the only real joy and

pleasure. I hope I am not offending against humility in giving you one little instance. You know I had a great turn for a pursuit, perfectly harmless in itself, that of bird-skinning: somehow, I never used to feel quite satisfied when I was engaged in it, and though my confessor almost advised me not to give it up, I was still disquieted. Gradually one little religious duty and then another rose up, so that I found at length day after day my time so taken up, that I had none left for the birds. My Rule as it now stands is about as follows, but I will not call it a Rule, since I feel myself almost irresistibly drawn into it day after day. From 6.45 till about 9 o'clock, and then from about a quarter to 10 until half-past, I spend in the church. Two masses with morning and extempore prayers occupy the time. The latter particularly upset my having a definite time

for beginning and ending. My Director advises me not to restrain them, as he says they are a particular grace, for which I am most grateful. Parade, &c., occupies me until nearly 12 o'clock, when I go to the chapel at the convent of the good sisters of the Sacré Cœur, which is very quiet and devotional, and to which they have most kindly given me free access. Here I make my meditation, and say the prayers of the different little orders (the Scapular, Girdle of St. Thomas, and Sacred Heart) to which I belong, and also part of the Little Office of our Blessed Lady. This takes me till a quarter to 2, when I have to drill generally for an hour, after which I get into plain clothes, lunch, and make my visit to the Blessed Sacrament. I have then leisure till 5½ to visit the one or two poor people I know, or to do any other thing I may have to attend to, or to get a walk. From 5½ to

6½, I am most thankful to say, I have generally one or two soldiers either in or out of the hospital, who like to receive what little instruction I can give them ; many of the poor fellows are willing to learn and overcome their ignorance, which is now and then so deplorable that they do not know right from wrong. . . . At 6½ we have the prayers of the Soldiers' Confraternity, after which I recite my Rosary, then comes mess, and then I either go to see my director (to whom I need hardly tell you I am much attached), or I say night prayers for my poor blind man, and get to bed at about 11½ or 12 o'clock. You see I have thus not much time for spiritual reading. However, at odds and ends of times, I generally manage to read a little, and have some very nice books ; my favourite is the 'Following of Christ,' which our mother gave me before I left

home ; my Director also most kindly gave me two charming ones called the 'Memorial of a Christian Life,' by Bd. Lewis of Granada, and 'The Elevation of the Soul to God,' which combines reading and meditation, and is most beautiful in its sentiments, and heart-stirring as well as pious in its meditations. As to the 'Pious Christian' you so kindly gave me, I am hardly able to see it ;—no sooner has one soldier done with it, than another asks for it ; and I don't wonder. My only fear is that it will become illegible from thumb-marks : already it has a very savoury odour of tobacco, for which it has, I trust, given in return the odour of sanctity which it contains.

* * * * *

"You have asked me once or twice to tell you about the Church here, and en-

closed you will find a very rough sketch of it. It is perfectly plain, but is a good size, and has a broad gallery running the whole way round it, the pillars of which form the aisles. On one side of the high altar is the altar of our Blessed Mother, and on the other that of St. Joseph; the statue of our Blessed Lady is a nice one, and is a good size, but the wee little image of St. Joseph distresses me. I took your advice of placing myself under his special protection, and am sure he has afforded it to me. It seems strange that devotion to him is so little cultivated; he who was deemed worthy to be the spouse of the spotless Mother of God, and to hold the position of father to our Divine Lord, must indeed have been a saint specially after God's own heart, a gentle, simple, loving saint. What a beautiful solemnity you must have had in honour of St.

Catherine of Sienna ! I have not read her life yet, but my Director has told me many of the events of it ; she must indeed have been a saint, and her fidelity in all her trials to Almighty God, particularly through that terrible attack of spiritual aridity, is a most encouraging example. Already prayers for the soldiers have had an effect, and there are now two or three who had formerly not been living up to their religion, and who are now to all appearances turning over a really new leaf, so please don't remit prayers in their behalf, though it be but one Hail Mary each day.—Your prayer in my behalf is also mine, that His holy will may be accomplished in me ; at the same time, I should esteem it the greatest of blessings if He should be pleased to call me to the religious life, though my past ingratitude and present shortcomings

render me utterly unworthy of such a favour. Pray that He may preserve me in the hour of temptation, and also that I may ever be most humble and sensible of my own weakness and imperfection.

“ Ever your devoted brother in
our dear Lord,

“ HENRY E. DORMER.”

The meagre outlines which he here gives of his daily life have to be filled up from the testimony given by his friends and brother officers after his death, and from the manuscript notes found among his papers. First, then, as to his practices of devotion. The time which he regularly gave up during the day to prayer and meditation was, as will have been seen, considerable, but he makes no allusion in the letter above quoted to the long

watches before the Blessed Sacrament, in which he spent a great portion of the night. At first he was accustomed to remain in the church after it was closed for the night, and had found a way of unfastening the latch, so as to let himself out at any hour he chose without notice. Afterwards, however, the good fathers allowed him free use of the key. "Every night at 11 o'clock, therefore, he noiselessly crept on the verandah of the priest's house, and took the key of the church from a secret spot where it was purposely placed for him, known only to himself, the priests, and the sexton, and then went to pay his homage to the Blessed Sacrament before retiring for the night. No doubt at all that the morning sun often found him still before the altar, pouring out his heart in love to God, and forgetful of the repose which his body

needed.”* One of his confidential friends in London says that “he often spent entire nights before the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church, of which he had the key;” and the fact is likewise attested by some of his brother officers, who, lodging in the same house with him, noticed that he came in and went out at all hours of the night, and afterwards found out the cause. It seems certain, also, that in his own account of his daily manner of life, he has barely indicated the amount of time which he devoted to prayer. One of his friends writes that he spent whole consecutive hours in the convent chapel every day, generally placing himself before the

* Biographical notice, published in the “Catholic Telegraph” of Cincinnati, November 7th, 1866. This notice was written by one of the Dominican Fathers who knew him intimately.

altar of our Lady, and that to see his profound respect, his immovable posture, and his ardent glance fixed on the tabernacle where his Lord reposed, you would have thought him a seraph in adoration.* "His devotion for the adorable Sacrament of the altar," writes another, "was extraordinary. He never wearied speaking to our Divine Lord concealed under the mystic bread of the altar. The fire of love that consumed his soul within, sent a glow of warmth without, mantling his cheeks, and spreading a heavenly flame over his whole face during his protracted visits to the Blessed Sacrament. . . . Like St. Catherine of Sienna, he could have spent all his days prostrate before the altar that contained his love."† "When he assisted at Benediction," says another, "he appeared rapt in God."

* MS. Correspondence. † Catholic Telegraph.

His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was likewise evinced in another way. In Canada, as in England, the Holy Viaticum is carried to the sick privately, and without any of those outward signs of respect customary in Catholic countries. But the lover of Jesus was not able to endure that his Lord should be left without some mark of homage, and it was his custom to attend the priest on such occasions as an escort. His brother officers frequently met him following one of the fathers through the streets, always about six paces from him, and used to wonder what it could mean. One of them, however, guessed the cause, and found on inquiry that he was accustomed to wait about the church till the priests were sent for to carry the Blessed Sacrament to some sick person, when he would follow with his head bent down,

and would pass any of his friends without taking the slightest notice, or seeming aware that they had been near him.* "It was indeed edifying," says the same authority before quoted, "to see this noble youth following the priest bearing the Viaticum, his eyes modestly bent on the ground, and his lips engaged in pronouncing pious ejaculations. On one occasion the priest's path led by the cricket-ground, where the officers and soldiers of the garrison were enjoying a game at their favourite amusement, but young Dormer kept on his way rapt in prayer, nothing intimidated or abashed by the stares of those around him."†

Next to the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, his devotion manifested itself to the Passion of our Divine Lord. The cross was the school in which he learnt his

* MS. Correspondence. † Catholic Telegraph.

lessons of humility and mortification. "Both when meditating and making the Stations of the Cross—which he made in the church once a day, and frequently oftener, and always on his knees—he appeared to endure an indescribable interior anguish, as if the pangs of a thousand arrows transfixed his inmost soul."* He had also a tender and special devotion to the ever blessed Mother of God. During the month of May he kept her altar at the convent chapel supplied with bouquets of choice flowers. They were sent as from an unknown hand, but the good religious were in no doubt as to whence they came. On the recurrence of all her festivals he approached the Sacraments with unusual devotion, and was accustomed to experience more than ordinary spiritual fervour on those days. It was generally through this

* Catholic Telegraph.

unfailing "Help of Christians" that he presented his petitions to God. He also had a great love for the saints of the Dominican order, and seemed to acquire new strength and ardour from the study of their lives, frequent allusions to which appear in his letters.

The devotion of Henry Dormer, however, was not barren; it expressed itself not merely in the spiritual exercises of prayer, but in the practice of solid virtue, and specially of charity and mortification. His charity was equally displayed in fulfilling the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. "His labours among the soldiers for their instruction were arduous and untiring. He provided each of them with a prayer-book, or a set of beads. Those who were sick and in hospital he visited every day, and read for them from some pious book. He also recited the



Rosary each evening publicly in the church with the soldiers. He took a peculiar pleasure in endeavouring to reclaim drunkards, and seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of compassion for this class of unfortunates." But his charity was not confined to the men of his regiment. "No appeal of distress was ever made to him in vain, and he did not wait for objects of need to come to him, but sought them out in their dens of misery, and relieved their wants."* Nor did he stop to ask the religion of the destitute before bestowing his alms; it was sufficient for him to know that they were suffering to entitle them to relief. He appears to have spent almost as much time in the houses of the poor and the sick as in church, and his servant was accustomed to say that "he always knew where to find Mr. Dormer, for when he was

* Catholic Telegraph.

not in church he was in the hospital or visiting the poor." One old woman sick of fever who lived at a considerable distance from London was the object of his particular care, and in very cold weather he has been known to cross a swollen river barefoot in order to reach her residence.* "He was an active member of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul, and many a pillow of suffering did his kind, gentle, and soothing words smooth. Indeed he gave his life at last as a martyr in the cause of charity, for the disease of which he died was contracted at the sick bed of a poor person whom he was visiting.

"Every Sunday he was to be seen in the church teaching catechism, and he took the greatest interest and pleasure in impressing on the minds of the children, both by words and interesting examples,

* MS. Correspondence.

the truths of religion and the principles of morality.”*

The Catholic soldiers having got up a bazaar for the purpose of liquidating the debt on the Church, he underwent untold fatigues and annoyances to secure its success, and parted with his gold watch and other valuables to make it more attractive.

The mortifications which he practised were both exterior and interior. He appears to have had a very powerful attraction to a life of penance, and his spiritual directors found it difficult to restrain him on this point within the bounds of discretion. In fact, to use the expression of one of his Catholic friends, “if he could have experienced a regret in his last moments, it must have been that, like St. Louis Gonzaga, he had reason to reproach

* Catholic Telegraph.

ful gaiety, so that among the questions noted to be submitted to his Director there occurs one on the best way of sanctifying this natural cheerfulness which, as he feared, endangered his guard over himself. It was therefore no movement of nature, or disposition of taciturnity, that induced him to withdraw from the society of his brother officers, and almost to cut himself off from the world. It proceeded from the restraint which he had imposed on every thought and every word, with a view to referring each movement of his heart, and each moment of his life, to God, with a most pure and actual intention. "How can I do enough for God?" he writes—"for God, who has so loved us as to give his only-begotten Son for us? . . . Every act performed, or cross endured, with the intention of pleasing God, is an act of love. What proof of love can you give so great as that

of *seeking to please*? Since pleasure has always been your study, seek it at its only source, *which is God*. True, the pursuit of it will often be opposed to the flesh: it must be a pleasure of *faith*, not of *sensation*; but remember the pleasure that succeeds any violence done to the flesh!"

Accordingly, the whole strength and purpose of his will appears to have been bent to the twofold object of sanctifying the most trifling act of every day, and making it a means of self-conquest, and of preserving unbroken, as far as he could, for a single moment, his sense of the presence of God. A few extracts from his note-books will best show in what way he reduced these desires to practice, and devised for himself a system by which, as he beautifully expressed it, he was "living under a network of gold and precious stones."

"If even indifferent acts can be made

pleasing to God by merely offering them up to Him with a pure intention, how much more pleasing to Him and how important are all, even the *smallest*, acts of virtue! He does not so much value the acts themselves according to their absolute worth, as according to the affection, fervour, and desire of pleasing Him with which they are done. Do not fear, then, to offer the most insignificant acts up to Him, in all simplicity of heart. . . . Recollect yourself before all your different actions and occupations, and pray before them, and endeavour to refer them *directly* to God. Many acts to be well performed (he appears here to be referring to his military duties) require one's whole attention: therefore, before performing them, offer them to Almighty God; and afterwards, *endeavour to despise them*. Attention to military duties should be entire; *it is*

the prayer of the time. . . . Endeavour to resist all feelings of pleasure and satisfaction that many acts naturally induce, such as shooting, drill, gymnastics: mourn over the frailty and imperfection of your nature that can take pleasure in any worldly act or excellence, and give thanks to God for everything in which you succeed, or are proficient. Resolve *never* more to expose yourself to the occasions of past sins, which were pleasures innocent enough in themselves. . . . If a mortification be difficult, or a cross hard to bear, reflect that at the hour of death you will be delighted to have done it, and let the same thought stimulate you when languid or inclined to backsliding. *Crush the howlings of the flesh* with that one thought, *The hour of death is the one moment for which you live!*" Then he notes down some things which may be turned into sacrifices and sancti-

fyng crosses, such as the daily duties of life, when irksome, and performed faithfully ; the disagreeable words or manner of others ; unexpected calls on time ; having to talk when we wish to be silent ; provoking ways of servants which dispose us to be irritable : and he adds, "When troubled by temptations to impatience, pray unceasingly to our Blessed Lady. Let your prayer be humble, devout, submissive, and patient. Never be impatient or plaintive under these crosses." He carried his mortification even into his devotions. "Every suffering, pain, or affliction is a help to salvation, even though it disturbs your prayers and takes away all the pleasure of serving God. Remember that it passes away, and that so long as it does not interfere with your salvation, it does not matter what happens to you. . . . Do continual violence to yourself. If you wish

to sit, walk; if to be silent, talk; if to talk, be silent. . . . Do not let the presence of others deter you. Be not ashamed of God or religion. Guard against dawdling, or putting off what seems disagreeable. Do everything at once with modesty, and no intervals. You should have the same alacrity in doing things indifferent, or even disagreeable, as you have in doing what your heart is set upon." In this last particular he seems to have had a peculiar dread of finding his own will "tallying too often with what seems to be the will of God," lest he should insensibly be following nature. "Strive always to excite the desire of mortification and fasting; and remember, you are not prohibited things (it is presumed that he meant penances) that will not endanger your health. . . . Offer up to God the cheerfulness of conversation in which you indulge with your

brother officers, with the intention of glorifying Him, by showing that a man may strive to lead a good life, and still be cheerful, and not morose and gloomy. At the same time avoid *enthusiasm of manner*, and endeavour to avoid those subjects of conversation into which you would be liable to throw your heart. Never say a bad word for your neighbour, and do not willingly listen when you hear any one abused. Be humble, and avoid argument. Be conciliatory, guarded, and self-possessed. . . . In associating with brother officers, *keep a reserve* for Almighty God. . . . *Before going to parade*, think that it is part of the duty of your state of life in which Almighty God has placed you, and perform your duty with the intention of pleasing Him. *Before spiritual reading*, offer your mind and heart to God. *Before recreation*, offer it up also to Him, because it

is necessary and innocent in its end and means. *Before afternoon drill*, think that it is your duty to your good God to learn your work. Offer up the loudness of your voice. *Before going to the hospital*, remember how dear to God are all acts of charity, and that He values them according to the love with which you perform them. *Before visit to the Blessed Sacrament and Rosary*, remember that next to hearing Mass and performing acts of charity, they are the most important actions of the day. *Before going to bed*, review all the frivolities of the world that have engaged your heart or attention ; analyse them, compare them with acts of virtue, and bewail your folly and depravity that can give so much affection to them. Let your last thought at night be of the great and sublime mysteries at which, though utterly unworthy, you are to be present in the morning."

But neither devotion nor mortification can be held of any value except in so far as they are accompanied by humility; and this was the cherished virtue of this singularly gifted soul. It was based on a solid foundation; namely, a most lively sense of his dependence on grace, and a very keen and extraordinary appreciation of the inestimable value of one degree of grace. "Remember," he writes in his points of meditation, "that grace is the free and gratuitous gift of the goodness of God: His blood is its price; His happiness its reward. The more watchful, retired, and silent you are, the more grace you will be disposed to receive. What a slight breath ruffles it! and what innumerable enemies it has! We are responsible for every grace we receive. How precious it is!—so precious that we must readily give up anything, sacrifice anything, that im-

pedes or weakens it. Prayer, and fear, and constant watchfulness are essential to its maintenance; and remember that if we were entirely stript of it at any moment, we could not complain." A great number of the questions which he appears to have prepared for the decision of his Director turn on the value of grace, the easiness of forfeiting it, and the best means of cherishing and preserving it. In one of his letters to the same spiritual guide, he writes: "I am sometimes very uneasy lest by little omissions I should lose particular graces: I do not mean *constant* omissions, but once in a way—for instance, omitting to go and see a poor person on a particular day, or indulging myself in some unnecessary gratification at my meals, or not paying sufficient attention to an inspiration to do a good act, and hence forgetting to do it. I presume I ought

not to take notice of these omissions, or else make an act of contrition and think no more about them. The reason of my being troubled is that I imagine every particle of grace to be something so precious that no opportunity should be lost to obtain even the smallest fraction of it." In his points of meditation and self-examination he writes : "*You are never secure* ; you can never tell at what moment, or in what form, temptation may arise. Write down every fault and shortcoming : no matter how frequent they be, resolve again and again ; pray with great humility for the necessary grace, and try to resign yourself to God's Holy Will : without His grace, of which you are utterly unworthy, you cannot be patient." "You have seen that you cannot control your irritability, your own will, or your manner. Therefore you cannot control yourself in anything. You

have learnt that if you do not constantly humble yourself, you think you are doing well, and thriving in grace, when you are perhaps getting weaker. Every little thing moves you, and you have seen that your peace has been procured by avoiding, not by resisting, temptations. Without searching self-scrutiny, many faults escape you. Be strong in prayer, and never give up, but cry louder and louder, even for a whole day."

His humility led him to regard his past life with a kind of horror, and to express himself regarding it in terms that might be liable to misconception, did we not know the intense self-aborrence which arises in souls in whom the operations of Divine grace are powerfully manifested. His life in the world had been regular, passed for the most part under his father's roof. One of his fellow-officers remarks

on the fact of his having been "strictly virtuous and pious even at home;" and his director at college describes him as "most virtuous, possessed of a great depth of thoroughly practical piety, high principled, and gifted with great moral courage." Those who knew him in society at an earlier period of his life, remarked that even then his example had its own influence for good; and words dropped by him in the midst of what seemed frivolous conversation, have since borne no inconsiderable fruit. Yet the deep compunction of heart with which he looked on the years he had lost in the world, springing out of the intense love of God now awakened within him, found expression in words like the following: "Why do I not grovel, and moan, and weep all my days, and dwell in dungeons, for my sins and ingratitude?" And again: "Most miserable is the man

that is not conscious of his own misery, ingratitude, and insensibility in the service of God. It is His infinite goodness that continues to pour out His graces in spite of our senseless ingratitude. What should we not do did we but serve Him with the gratitude we owe Him?" And again: "I feel as if I were doing nothing in the service of God, and as if I did not attach sufficient importance to spiritual exercises." His extreme distrust of himself is many times expressed. "Remember you are in constant danger. Your danger is greatest when you are unmindful of it." But as constant and heartfelt is his expression of confidence in God. "Ought I not to be confident," he writes, "that my smaller falls will never meet with the punishment which my greater crimes did not incur? Yes, my Father, I will never believe that Thou wouldst inflict upon me

when I was endeavouring to serve Thee, how poorly and feebly soever, the punishment which Thou didst not inflict on my enormities!" Many such passages might be quoted, but the deep humility of his soul, and his willingness and desire to submit to reproof, is best shown in the following letter, addressed by him to one of the Dominican Fathers of the English Province, who enjoyed his confidence. The reader will know how to interpret the strong expressions of self-condemnation which it contains :—

“ London, Canada W.

“ July 22nd, 1866.

“ My dear Father,

“ I at last find myself at leisure to do what I have long had the intention of doing, and what is at once a pleasure and

a duty of gratitude. Often as I have resolved to write to you, something has invariably occurred to prevent my doing so. To you, dear Father, I feel specially indebted as having been the means, under our Eternal Father, of working my conversion and of bringing me to the active practice of that Holy Religion which for years I had been desecrating and perverting from the greatest of blessings to an additional weapon of sin, by my coldness and negligence. Our Good God only knows how often I have deserved to be cut off suddenly and cast into eternal torments, and to His infinite Goodness, and to the prayers of some of His faithful servants, I feel that I am alone indebted for having been preserved from so terrible a fate. I wish, Father, to lay my mind open to you as far as I can, for you have displayed so kindly an interest in my

behalf that I venture to hope you will, if you have time, write to me and give me advice. First, I am much troubled when I think of how much is due to Almighty God, and how little I do for Him: often when reading Spiritual Books or the Lives of the Saints I feel a desire to imitate their great penances, watchings, and fastings—for, if men, who, many of them, had hardly committed one sin in their lives, did so severely mortify themselves, what should not I do who have been so great a sinner? Then, on the other hand, my weak nature fears these things, and groans at the thought of them; and yet I sometimes think I can conquer these emotions of nature; but my Director's advice to me is 'moderation in all things.' One doubt, however, often arises connected with these desires of severe mortification, and that is, 'Are not these inspirations of God? and

by not performing them do I not lose the superabundant graces they would bring?' And again, the laws of the Church as regards Penance in earlier ages, and which were only relaxed with great reluctance on account of the tepidity of the faithful, urge me to more severe self-denial. Another difficulty I have is in following the counsels of my Director in regard to my relations with my brother officers; his advice being that I should associate with them as far as I can, whereas my own disposition is to cut myself off from them as far as possible, in order that I may be more recollected, and also in order that I may not commit the faults which associating with them entails, faults not very grave in themselves, but which I fear might lead to graver ones. Another and very grievous feeling I experience is a kind of coldness and indifference, which seems to me different from spiritual aridity,

inasmuch as it does not urge me not to perform the little duties to Almighty God which I have, under him, marked out for myself, but rather seems to blind me to a sense of their importance, and I even feel it when approaching the Holy Sacraments. Again, dear Father, I find my mind so ill-regulated, so often wandering from the true spirit of religion, from that total dependence upon Almighty God, and so often entertaining uncharitable thoughts without my perceiving them. And again, I have the greatest difficulty in humbling myself *sincerely*, in feeling truly and really what a miserable nothing I am. And, alas! how many and very many are the faults of which I am perhaps totally ignorant!

“I am very grateful to you for your promise to remember me in the Holy Sacrifice, and I hope you will ever continue to do so, as well as to remember me in your prayers.

Your most kind wish that our dear Lord would grant me a vocation to a religious life, finds an echo in my breast : should it be His Holy Will to confer so inestimable a blessing on one so utterly unworthy, I trust in His own good time He will make known that Holy Will to me. And now, dear Father, I will conclude, hoping that, if you should have some leisure moments at your disposal, you will send me a few lines of advice. Please not to spare me, but rather if you see in this or in any of my letters to N——, some of which you have seen, (I believe,) matter for correction, do not fail to bestow it upon

“Your affectionate child in our Lord,

“HENRY E. DORMER.”

The feelings with which he had come to regard the world produced a profound sentiment of detachment. “We believe,” says

the writer of the Biographical Notice before quoted, "that he would cheerfully have exchanged his commission for the solitary hut of the hermit. And we have a vivid recollection one lovely day last spring when accompanying Mr. Dormer in a walk near London, of hearing him, while expatiating on the pleasures of solitude, express the wish that he could spend all his life in such a spot (as that where we then were), praising God in the wonderful works of creation." During his life in England he had taken part with keen enjoyment in the pleasures of refined society, but young as he was he had experienced their incapacity to satisfy the heart, and this sense of the emptiness of worldly things finds frequent expression in his private notes.

"Men must be greedy and insatiable in their desires," he says, "until they fix them

on God. Every desire that is not of God is a handful of sand thrown into the eyes of the mind and heart; its gratification only gives birth to another desire. Even worldlings have discovered that there is no such thing as satiety in the world, and have preached the doctrine of moderation. Miserable blindness! why could they not see the real cause of insatiability? If thou hast ever a longing or desire which is not directly for God, be not blinded by it—it is a delusion; all one's desires and longings are made for Him. If He be not their object, there will be no satisfaction. Be not, therefore, moved by disappointments in earthly things. Hadst thou gained thy desires, thou wouldst not have been satisfied or the happier—*Remember the void at the end of the best run!*"* "Never become

* He was an excellent horseman, and at an earlier period of his life remarkably fond of hunting and field sports.

the slave to anything," he writes elsewhere ; " you are a slave to a person when you are so wrapped up in their society that you could not at any moment say goodbye to them for ever, should it be necessary for the good of your soul ; and you are a slave to a pleasure when you cannot at any moment renounce it for ever, if your soul require it." This little passage occurs in a sort of meditation on the subject of *responsibility*, in which he observes : "*As an officer* you are responsible for every word you say to your men, for every conclusion you may jump at as to their conduct, for every partiality you give way to, for every punishment you inflict, and every duty you perform. And *as a gentleman* you are responsible for the absolute truth of every assertion you make ; for the motive of every one of your acts, however praiseworthy the acts themselves may be. Great

faults and great crimes are the full developed plants whose seeds are neglect of the above points. And a man may well give thanks that he has lived and died in obscurity, if his youth has been spent in disregard or ignorance of his responsibilities in ordinary matters of life."

He appears at all times to have had great delicacy of conscience on the subject of charity, especially in words, a matter frequently referred to in his private notes. "Give to your neighbour your comforts, if he needs them. Choose for yourself the most unsheltered and uncomfortable spot in which to sleep, the lowest place at table, and even when fasting the coarsest rations; and offer all up to the Blessed Virgin's honour. In all things think first of your neighbour. . . . Beware of being opinionated, its origin is pride; your neighbour is quite as likely to be right as yourself; and never

contradict without perfect certainty, and not then unless it be necessary. Avoid hasty opinions and first impressions, and remember how unjust it is to encourage detraction. Never harbour a censorious thought or feeling."

Some of the most remarkable of these private notes are in the form of questions to be submitted to the guide of his conscience, and display a very singular power of self-analysis, whilst at the same time they prove the deeply interior character of his piety. A few of these may be given as examples:—

"If you find your heart set on doing anything, innocent in itself, and that you are looking forward to it with great excitement and a beating heart, is it necessary to give up the idea of doing it, or is it sufficient to resist the undue feeling of excitement?"

“Should I strain myself to obtain actual devotion in prayer?

“Should I continually offer up every little insignificant action, even if I feel wearied in doing so?

“How can one recognize our Lord in the person of one's neighbour?

“Is it charity to do what one can to please an equal—for example, by making oneself pleasant in conversation? or is it not better to be silent, in order to be more recollected in God, though this may be less agreeable to one's neighbour?

“When does a distraction become wilful, and is it a distraction to consent to a thought good in itself, but not connected with the prayers one is saying?

“Should I endeavour to refer every action to God, even though the *primary* notion that suggested them may have been a worldly one?

“Can I offer up my cheerfulness which endangers my guard over myself?”

“Are not extraordinary graces very easily lost?”

“Is it well to follow inspirations to acts of fervour, and to continue in prayer as long as the inclination lasts, *even though it be for hours?*”

“Are impulses felt in meditation to be afterwards acted on, even though the feeling that prompted them no longer acts?”

“What is it to live continually in the presence of God?”

It may be observed that the character of these notes and meditations, of which but a very small portion is here quoted, is the more remarkable from the fact that Mr. Dormer had not been accustomed to any extensive course of spiritual reading. The books at his command in Canada were few and of the simplest kind, and he

appears not to have spent any considerable time in reading. Whatever lights he possessed, therefore, must have been gained either in prayer, or from the wise and prudent direction which he had the happiness of enjoying.

Yet some of his remarks coincide in a remarkable manner with the axioms of the Saints. Thus we might suppose ourselves to be reading a quotation from St. Catherine of Sienna when we find him laying down "perseverance, humility, and confidence" as the three conditions of prayer, or reminding himself that "every act of patience is an act of the love of God."*

The sublime teaching of St. John of

* "There is no means by which the soul may become more perfectly united to God than by humble, faithful, and persevering prayer."

"Patience shows if we truly love God or not, for Patience is the pith of Charity."—*St. Catherine of Sienna.*

the Cross was equally unknown to him, yet it is impossible to read over his notes without perceiving that he was profoundly impressed with the principle on which that great master has based the spiritual life—the necessity, namely, of detachment. Thoughts and resolutions on this head occur in every variety of form. “Never fix your heart on anything earthly,” he writes. “How can I learn to despise all earthly things? everything passes away, but as long as it does not interfere with salvation it matters not what becomes of you. Nothing is of consequence that will not appear against you at the hour of death.”

As he wrote, so he acted. He appeared to be possessed with the desire of stripping himself of everything that could possibly be a tie. He felt a scruple about retaining the portraits or keepsakes of friends, and

would have destroyed all such memorials had his Confessor permitted him. Among the questions prepared for submission to the latter, we find one on the doubt he felt whether it would not be more pleasing to God to destroy or give away all objects to which his affections could possibly cling. *What was most pleasing to God*—this was the touchstone to which every action was brought; this was the measure of his purity of intention. “At the beginning of every action,” he writes, “ask yourself, is this the action most pleasing to God which I can now perform? The worth of our actions consists in the fervour and *desire of pleasing* God with which we perform them. What proof of Love is so great as that of *seeking to please*? Have a general intention in all you do of *pleasing God*.” It is also instructive to notice the great horror he had conceived for human

respect, which he instinctively felt to be the greatest of all obstacles which has to be encountered on the path of sanctity by one whose lot is cast in the world. We quote some of the passages in which he animates himself to this most difficult of all practices of courage, not as presenting anything remarkable or original in their expression, but as proofs that the necessity of vigilance on this point was ever before his eyes. "Trust in Almighty God," he says, "and *fear no man*. . . . Resist thinking about what others say or think. . . . Remember that so surely as you are faithful to God, as surely you will have to encounter contumely and contempt. . . . In all occupations and exercises turn a deaf ear to the praise or derision of others. Do not continue to countenance or commit sin for the sake of avoiding being called inconsistent ; what can be weaker than to allow

the fear of this accusation to lead you from your duty? . . . In all you do and say, let your thought be, 'Is this right? is this true? is this honest? is it noble?' never let 'What will others say? what will they think?' enter your head. If you think you are doing right, you are above such considerations." He laments his own weakness on this point, and assigns it as a motive for withdrawing more and more from the world. "I cannot mix with the world without being inflamed with human respect which is surely an obstacle to grace;" but in reply to this complaint he notes down what is probably a fragment of advice received from his Spiritual Director, and carefully hived up as food for resolution and meditation. "It is your imperfection to have feelings of human respect, lethargy, or vanity, but you gain a victory each time you perform an act in

spite of these feelings. The disquiet and dissatisfied feelings which follow the performance of the act are but the groans of the flesh against the spirit."

But it may be said, notes and resolutions written on paper can hardly be taken as any satisfactory test of the degree of practical virtue really attained. The opinion of his Director as to the fidelity with which he carried out these resolutions will therefore be valuable. "It is impossible," he writes, "for you to form any idea of his great sanctity. The most eminent virtue recorded in the lives of the Saints does not contain a love of God more pure and single than his; nor a detachment from the world and all the things of life, more perfect than that which governed all his actions. He thought of and spoke of nothing but God, and things appertaining to God, for the three last months of his life. Often and

often the midnight hour would find him still engaged in these conversations, and even then he was loth to break off. . . . He thought he could never do a hundredth part enough for God; the world he was completely dead to. Its pleasures and pastimes had no attractions for him. To associate with any worldly society was a species of martyrdom for him. In fact, it was his wish never to be a single moment out of the presence of God, and I believe he realized his desire as nearly as any human being can do so. Even when on parade, his mind was occupied with God, so much so that he did not hear the commands of superior officers. Mess was a torture to him, and duty alone made him attend it. There he scarcely ever entered into conversation with the other officers, merely politely answering the questions put to him. His life was to be before the

Blessed Sacrament and praying at our Immaculate Mother's Altar, visiting the sick, dispensing charities to the needy, instructing the little ones, advising the soldiers for their spiritual good, and trying to reclaim drunkards amongst both soldiers and civilians The Catholics of London all looked upon him as a living Saint. They never tired of talking of his extraordinary virtue, and his example had a wonderful effect in increasing virtue among the people." In the same letter he encloses the rule of life followed by his penitent, and adds that he was in the habit of exceeding it in many things. His brother officers observed that, when in camp, he used to spend the whole of his free time in his tent on his knees. One of them at the beginning of his illness, having held some conversation with one of the Dominican Fathers, writes that he was assured by that

Father that Mr. Dormer's confessor had done his utmost to moderate the rigour of his penitent's life, adding that he was the most singular example of excellence he had ever met. His words were, "If ever a saint was on earth, Mr. Dormer is one."

The world is often enough tempted to conclude that Christian qualities of a very high order, and particularly the congruous virtues of humility and self-abasement, are difficult to conciliate with the conventional ideas which we attach to the character of a high-spirited gentleman; it may be well therefore just to refer to the published testimony of those who knew him most intimately in Canada, and who have described him as not only "a model of every virtue," but also "a type of every gentlemanly excellence, the embodiment of all that is captivating in refined and accomplished manners." "As an officer and a Christian

gentleman," they say, "he possessed the esteem of all who knew him—he enjoyed the goodwill and respect of his brother officers . . . and by the men of his own company he was fairly idolized. His strength and agility of *physique*, which were beyond the ordinary stamp, were only surpassed by the vigour of his mind; the comeliness, grace, and unruffled calm of his personal appearance presenting a fair picture of the beauty and serenity of soul concealed within." "We should not have dwelt on these minor points," continues the same writer, "but that we wished to impress on the mind of the worldly reader the truth that no rank, however distinguished, loses its lustre, and no position, however trustworthy, deteriorates in the keeping of practical virtue. Mr. Dormer's life proves the truth of a maxim often practically denied, namely, that a man need

not cease to be a fervent and edifying Christian, when he acts as a gentleman ; and that virtue—not civic virtue merely, but the humble and simple virtue of the Gospel—imposes no restrictions on the most faithful discharge of the highest obligations.”*

There is another delusion into which the world commonly falls when presented with examples of singular virtue such as the present. The influence of grace is supposed to have been so strong in these souls as to have become almost irresistible ; and it is not unfrequently taken for granted that the victory they achieved was purchased at very little cost to nature. In this case their example is regarded as offering no lesson of practical import to those less powerfully assisted. They were carried over their obstacles, it is said, and were al-

* Catholic Telegraph.

ways swept onwards by a strong current ; it is therefore not fair to set their perfection before us as the standard which can be reached by ordinary souls, much of whose strength has to be spent in wearily rowing against the stream. One very obvious reply to this objection is suggested by the glimpse which the foregoing pages have afforded us into the interior of Henry Dörner's soul. If grace eventually gained so firm an empire over him, it was because each new measure of it had been faithfully corresponded to. The whole lesson of his life may be summed up in the words, *fidelity to grace*, and to "the least particle of grace ;" as he himself expressed it. Not one of his talents was laid up and buried in a napkin, and therefore more was given to him who had proved himself the faithful steward of what he had. But besides this, it is a most untrue and mischievous de-

lusion to suppose that the higher degrees of virtue are ever acquired without painful struggle. If the pages from which we have already quoted so largely present us with the picture of a soul pressing along the narrow way with a firm and determined step, they also prove to us, beyond dispute, that the victory of the spirit over the flesh, even when most entirely the work of grace, is always a bloody one, and that moments of discouragement and the sense of present weakness were permitted in order that the servant of God might learn to rest his entire confidence, not on himself, but on God. A few extracts will suffice, which exhibit to us the touching spectacle of a soul persevering in its course in spite of weariness, disgust, and the manifold assaults of nature. Thus among the questions addressed to his Director, appears the following :

“ If we are much afflicted, should we not

continue our prayers and religious exercises, even though we feel our afflictions so deeply as to be unable to fix the attention at all on our prayers?"

And the nature of these "afflictions" is indicated by another question; how, namely, we are to behave when harassed by distracting thoughts against faith, humility, or other virtues.

"Weary feelings and wandering thoughts" are among the failings with which he is continually reproaching himself, and as continually doing battle. "Miserable nothings that we are," he exclaims, "of what can we glory!" But he adds, "Never despair; there is no such word as *impossible* while perseverance remains in the dictionary." In another place we find the touching memorandum, "*When the world is irksome, cast yourself upon God,*" and on the fly-leaf of one of his books of devotion is

the pencilled resolution to "Bear crosses and crush self." "Some duties," he adds, "are to be performed with *patience, resignation, and severity.*" At times he bitterly complains of a certain dulness and insensibility. "I feel," he writes, "as if I were doing nothing in the service of God." Sometimes he humbly determines to "accept as penances aridities and distractions in prayer," and again and again he reminds himself that "however glaring, frequent, and miserably weak our falls may be, we should turn to God with a humble, contrite, and patient heart." And again, "No matter how frequent our falls may be, resolve again and again; pray with great humility for the necessary grace, and try to resign yourself to God's holy will."

Though his friends in England were very imperfectly acquainted with the kind of life which he had embraced, the tone of

his letters, notwithstanding the reserve with which he spoke of his practices of piety, quite prepared them to expect that he would eventually embrace a religious life. It therefore caused no surprise when he began to allude to a change of plans. The first letter quoted bears the date of August 1st, 1866:—

“Whether Almighty God will grant me the inestimable blessing of a religious vocation, He only knows; my constant prayer is that His holy will may be accomplished in me, but that if it be not contrary to His all-wise designs, I beg of Him to grant me this immense favour out of His abundant mercy. At present, my military duties are neither one thing nor the other to me, excepting I fear any worldly conversation should disturb my recollection, or revive within me that affec-

tion for worldly pleasures which the grace of God now represses, but which is not destroyed. I long for the day when everything that is of the world shall become hateful to me. I have still, I am grateful to say, the same Director, and should sadly feel his loss were he to be sent away. . . . I have much more to say, but will keep it for my next."

"Hall's Mills Camp,

"August 8th.

"Again I have missed the mail. I am now in camp. I was sent here on the 4th, (St. Dominic's,) in place of an officer who fell ill. It is God's holy will, and is therefore best, but it grieves me to be unable to hear Mass in the morning. However, except when on duty, I can walk in (4½ miles) and spend most of my day in

London, as usual, returning here at about 7½ P.M. I am almost overwhelmed when, with the light Almighty God gives me, I turn my eyes upon the immense and innumerable benefits He confers upon me, and still more am I confounded when I look upon the *nothing* that I give Him in return. I am unworthy of spiritual consolations, but our Lord is bountiful and superabundant in His mercies, and, knowing my weakness, He has had compassion upon it, and has constantly sustained me with spiritual delights, not from any merit whatever of mine, but to save me from despondency. Now and then He deprives me of them, as it were to exercise me in the absence of them, and of late this has become more frequent. How signal are His mercies, which on the one hand feed and sustain me, and on the other remind me of my dependence upon Him for them!

And now I will approach the main subject of your letter, and which is the subject nearest to my heart. I have for several months felt that the army is not my vocation. I have no interest in it as a profession, nor do I feel that I can do much good in it to those around me ; for though I do try to do a little good to the soldiers whenever I have an opportunity, I do not feel a great zeal or enthusiasm to work amongst them ; and though I say in the beginning of my letter that my military duties are not *irksome* to me, I think it is merely because they are so light. I have frequently talked the matter over with my Director, and the decision I came to was to remain in the army till my turn for leave to England should arrive, when I would without delay join the holy Order of St. Dominic ; and should I find at the expiration of my leave (which would be about

five months) that I had a true vocation, I could then sell out; but if, on the other hand, I had no vocation, I could return to my profession. Since then, however, I have felt more and more called away from the world, and with our good God's grace I am, I *think*, more and more detached from it. Certainly, I should be very miserable if I had to leave this place to go to one where I should not have the same religious advantages. In fact, if I were told to-morrow that I ceased to hold a commission, it would be one of the happiest days of my life. But though these are my feelings, I have no clearly defined leaning to any particular Order; at first, I was all for the Dominican one, but now I fancy one more contemplative and enclosed would be my vocation;—do you remember the fancy I used to have for the monks of St. Bernard? I wonder if it is to them I

am being drawn. Renew your prayers that I may be enlightened.

“Your devoted HENRY.”

His spiritual advisers, both in England and America, were far from counselling any precipitate course of action. They set before him the possibility of his sanctifying his present course of life, and endeavoured to direct his fervour to that end. This is evident from many entries in his private papers, as well as from the tenour of the letters addressed to him; but his sentiments remained unchanged, and appear at last to have satisfied all his friends as to the unmistakable character of his vocation.

On the 8th and 19th of the same month he addressed two letters to his father, in the first of which he expressed a doubt whether the army were his true vocation,

whilst in the second he opens to him his whole mind on what he calls, "The most important of subjects, involving as it does the complete change of my whole life, the abandoning the world, and all things that are of the world, that I may serve God more perfectly." After tracing the gradual steps by which he had been led to this determination, he solicits his father's permission to send in his papers and resign his commission without delay. Should he obtain such a permission, he purposes to apply for a three weeks' leave in order to make a retreat in a Dominican Convent in the United States, and finally to decide the important question. "I have ever looked on a vocation to the religious life," he says, "as the greatest of blessings, and am most grateful to our good God for having vouchsafed it to me, utterly undeserving as I am of such a favour."

The two next letters are written to other members of his family :—

“ 1866.

“ You must not expect a very worldly letter from me now, as you have no doubt heard of the great change Almighty God has wrought in me—a change for which I have indeed to be most grateful, and for which I trust, as far as in me lies, I shall ever prove so. It has been worked in me so gradually and imperceptibly that it would be impossible for me to delineate its progress ; all I can tell you about it I will. When I left England, I started fortified by the Sacraments, with the intention of leading as good a life as I could, but with no immediate intention of abandoning the world. Day by day and week by week, however, I found myself more and more drawn from the world, and

from all worldly pursuits, to the performance of spiritual works, until at length I found myself, by the grace and mercy of God, as I now am and have been for some time—isolated from my brother officers (if I except Mess and Parade) and from all worldly enjoyments—happier and more contented in mind. Still I feel the want to live a more perfect religious life, which can only be attained in a religious order ; added to which, all my happiness and peace rest *out* of the army, and even its slight daily duties are irksome to me, &c. I have, therefore, come to the firm conclusion that the army has ceased to be my vocation, and that it has pleased our Divine Lord in His great goodness to call me to Himself.”

The last phrase, indeed, contained an unconscious prophecy, which was very

sensibly felt when it was realized in a way so different from that in which it had been used. In the next very remarkable letter he analyzes with singular precision his grounds for believing that his vocation is a true one:—

“London, C.W.,

“Sept. 6th, 1866.

“My dearest —,

“I don't know what you will think of my long silence. But I don't think you will be displeased when I tell you the reason of my not having written for the last fortnight, and it is this, that I really have not been able to find time to do so without omitting some of my daily duties, and I have always a scruple about doing so except in a real case of necessity. You will have heard, then, that I wrote to my father and asked his permission to send in

my papers and to leave the army, and now perhaps you will like to know the reasons of my doing so. As I told you in my last, from the moment I left Stone, after having the inestimable blessing of being called by an All-merciful God from my evil ways and making my peace with Him, I have had a kind of resolution in my mind to abandon the world and join a religious order, and this desire has been gradually developing itself within me, and growing stronger and stronger. Your last letter certainly had the effect of arousing me to a more serious and deep consideration of this all-important matter than I had hitherto given it. On a thorough consideration of myself I came to the following conclusion. First, Almighty God has made me at last *dead* to this world. He has drawn me from all worldly pleasures and associations until I now find myself

happy only in seclusion, in freedom from all worldly cares, and in trying to serve Him. Secondly, my profession has become irksome to me ; I have ceased to have any heart for it, or interest in it ; and though I offer up all its duties to Him, yet I do not feel that I am serving Him in performing them, and they moreover often disturb the quiet and peace of mind with which He has blessed me. Thirdly, I have a kind of vague fear of associating with my brother officers—and yet I trust I have no uncharitable feeling towards them, and I think, by the grace of God, I would do anything I could for their temporal comfort or spiritual welfare. Fourthly, I have no such feeling of fear either towards the poor, or towards those who are leading spiritual lives. Now this is an entire revulsion of my nature, for, to my shame be it said, there was a time when I de-

spised the spiritual life, and was overbearing to the poor. Fifthly, I look upon my profession as an ungodly one; its real object is to kill our brethren, and though this may be commendable in defence of hearth and home, I can scarcely think it justifiable at any other time; moreover, I have a great repugnance to the spilling of human blood. Sixthly, many of the gifts and faculties with which a beneficent God has endowed me, are now lying idle—such as my aptitude for study and my turn for music. Seventhly, I feel a strong desire to serve our dear Lord more intimately and more *closely*, for having served the world all my life with my whole heart, now that He has deigned to call me from it, I should serve Him for the remainder of my days with my whole heart. Eighthly, except by a miracle of grace, I don't think I could live in the world and out of the

world ; that is to say, I could not now take part in a legitimate and moderate manner in the occupations and associations of the world, which all my life I have loved immoderately. Lastly, I do not feel any vocation to do good in the army, for though I strive to do what little I can, it is more from a feeling of duty than from any strong expectation of success. Some have always led good lives, and do not require the little aid that I can afford, since they have been standing firm in the midst of incessant storms and tempests, whilst I have been resting in a bay of sweet repose which an all-compassionate God prepared in consideration of my weakness. Moreover, my means of access to the men out of my own company is very slight, and it is only in the Hospital, or meeting them out at odds and ends of times, that I have an opportunity of speaking to them.

“The only thoughts that have crossed me that are in opposition to my leaving the army are: First, am I not too young in the spiritual life to take so decided a step? (yet I feel no hesitation about it). Secondly, though I have this desire to abandon the world, I do not feel strongly called to the ecclesiastical state of life, but have rather a desire to live wholly secluded and enclosed. Thirdly, I do not feel strongly called to any particular order, yet, as my Director says, Almighty God seems in several ways to have been directing me to the Dominican. First, by having called my sister to that order. Secondly, by the predilection He has given me for several members of it. Thirdly, by having twice made choice of members of that holy order to effect in me the work of conversion, viz., Fathers S—— and A——, and by having instilled within me a pecu-

liar affection and reverence for them both. Fourthly, I am quite undecided whether to join the order in this country, in England, or in Rome. If the first, it of course entails the sacrifice of never seeing my parents again; still, if it be His Holy Will, I feel that by His grace I could make that sacrifice without hesitation, and there is, perhaps, more good to be done in this country. On this point, however, I sincerely trust He will enlighten me. And now, my dear —, I have laid bare my mind to you, to the best of my ability. I have only to add that I should look upon a true vocation as the most inestimable of blessings, and I certainly feel that were I to be told to-morrow that I was no longer in the army, it would be the happiest day of my life. I have one more point to mention, which is the desire our dear Lord has given me of being stripped

of all superfluities; it makes me quite uncomfortable to see the amount of unnecessary things that I possess of one sort and another, and yet I do not see any advantageous (in a charitable point of view) way of disposing of them. This morning brought me a most acceptable letter from you. Before I close I have a proposal to make to you which I think might be to our mutual advantage—it is that we should mutually pray during a certain fixed time (say a fortnight) for the attainment of a particular virtue, or the curing of a particular fault. For example, supposing you receive this letter on the 20th, if you would pray from that day till October the 4th that I may be blessed with *true humility*, I will during that time make that virtue my peculiar study, and will pray that you too may be blessed with it. If you ap-

prove of this proposal, let me know ; of course it will not be *necessary* that we should make known what particular fault or virtue we have in view, or that during the same fortnight we should be peculiarly striving for the same virtue, though there might be perhaps a harmony of feeling therein that would be pleasing to God. I also heard this morning from Father A——. Please tell him what consolation I received from it. I should be very grateful if you would send him this letter—he will perhaps be able to judge whether the reasons I have given are sufficiently conclusive to justify the belief that our infinitely good Father has deigned to close His eyes to my utter unworthiness, to all the abominable faults and imperfections of my wretched nature, and to make me the recipient of His most precious gift, a true vocation.”

His father having yielded a willing consent to his son's change of plans, and advised his studying for the ecclesiastical or religious state in Rome, his next letters, dated September 9th and 20th, discuss this proposal, and express his joy at finding that he has the consent of his parents to the fulfilment of his cherished desire. "Going to Rome," he says, "requires serious reflection. I do not feel as if I could go to study there unless I were in some religious order. I am afraid of my own freedom, and have a desire to live under a more compulsory rule than that of a college. Meanwhile, all I can do is to pray and beg every one's prayers that God's holy will may be done."

But unforeseen obstacles arose to perplex and trouble him. His Director, on whose judgment he so greatly depended, was called away from London about the

middle of August, and the answer to the letter which he sent him, exposing his state of mind and begging for advice, was delayed for some time. In consequence of the expected Fenian raid, also, all leave for visiting the States was stopped, so that his purposed retreat was rendered impossible.

A letter addressed to one of his brothers, and three others written to his Director, afford the best insight into his state of mind at this time; and from the last, written only one week before his death, we may gather how totally and definitively he had offered to God the sacrifice of himself before being attacked by his last illness. The first letter, of which a portion only is quoted, is to his brother, and bears the date of September 16th:—

“All leave is stopped, and I therefore fear I shall not be able to get away and

make my retreat as I had hoped to do. It is a source of some uneasiness to me, as I hardly feel my vocation sufficiently strongly defined to send in my papers *at once*. I have received many cautions against doing anything precipitate in the commencement of a spiritual life, for Almighty God in His infinite goodness fills a soul when it first turns to Him with its whole heart, with such a torrent of spiritual consolations, as often to lead it to commit excess if not prudently directed; and I am therefore very anxious to make quite sure that it is his Holy Will that I should abandon my present profession before taking the final step. Life is very jolly as long as your eyes are closed, but as soon as they are opened, you see that it is very empty, and that its pleasures and occupations never fully satisfy; there is always a *something*

wanting, which *something* is the craving of the soul for its God, and the proof of this is, that when the soul does turn to God with its whole heart, the want of that *something* ceases entirely. You give me credit for a courage which I have never yet had to exercise when you say that prayer and mortification are distasteful—for our dear Lord makes them a far greater delight than any worldly pleasure ever was to me. God is the best of masters, and His service is a grateful service even in this life.”

“LONDON, C.W.

Commenced some days ago, but
only completed on this
Feast of St. Rose, 1866.

“My dear Father in Christ,

“You will no doubt be expecting to hear from me by this time, and I will

therefore delay writing no longer. It is certainly a blessing to live in these modern days as far as mutual intercourse and reading are concerned, and Providence seems specially to have ordained that with the growth of population and the spread of nations, the means of intercommunion should be facilitated and the true light everywhere disseminated. What a privation your departure hence might have been to me, were I likewise deprived of the means of communicating with you! Since the night I last saw you, I have several times thought seriously over the change of life which Almighty God in His Goodness seems calling upon me to make, and every time I have come to the same conclusion—that it is His Holy Will that I should leave the army. I will enumerate some of the reasons which have led me to this conclusion,

and you will be able to form your own opinion of the soundness and stability of them;—by stability I mean whether they are merely the thoughts and feelings of a first fervour (may He grant me a perpetual continuance of it!) or not. As I already told you, I have long ceased to take the slightest interest in it as a profession, and its duties are positively irksome to me if they interfere at all with the duties which I daily perform to God; and even the hour's drill I generally have is positively painful to me—though I think that is perhaps more nervousness than anything else. 2ndly. I have a vague fear of associating with others. 3rdly. Almighty God has *killed* me to the world, *i.e.*, I feel as if a barrier were now placed between me and even innocent enjoyments, to transgress which would be to resist the grace of recollection with which

He has blessed me ; and the very thought of indulging in any of my old amusements, such as visiting in country houses, or even shooting, makes me tremble—and to indulge in any of these pleasures would now be positive pain to me. I do not feel the want of any further relaxation than a walk, or a visit to a poor person, or a talk with the Fathers, affords. This I look upon, indeed, as one of the greatest of our dear Lord's blessings. 4thly. Though I have this disinclination to converse with worldlings, I have not at all that feeling towards either the poor or those who have given themselves up to the service of Almighty God ; and this is a total revulsion of feeling, for in the days of my darkness my inclination was ever to converse with my superiors. 5thly. My worldly goods are a positive burthen to me ; I have now what would fill three

portmanteaux full of different articles of one sort or another which are all superfluities, which I have ceased to have any use for, and which I don't know what to do with, as most of them are not suitable to be given in charity, being books and fine clothing; in fact, my very necessities I should be glad to get rid of. 6thly. I feel perfectly ready to give up everything that I may serve our good God more intimately and more closely—my friends, my family, and even my own father and mother. 7thly. I don't feel that I can serve Him closely in my present state of life, for though I offer up nearly every action directly to Him, and study to perform it for Him alone, still I feel I am not doing God's work. 8thly. Though I am receiving so many and such precious gifts and graces, I am still extremely weak—my peace, happiness, and recollection are

owing to the preservation from all grievous temptation which our all-bountiful and all-compassionate God deigns to grant in consideration of my weakness, and a very slight thing often disturbs me. If anything occurs to take up my attention and put me off my guard, I find myself falling into many of my old faults ; and though I seldom converse with others, I am still often far from being recollected when in their company, and against my will take notice in my own mind of their conversation. 9thly. I feel no particular vocation to do good amongst the soldiers, for though it would be to me a great joy to reform them, I don't see how to set about it, and I don't fancy they have sufficient respect for me to make them pay much attention to my words, if I except some of the well-disposed or of the truly penitent. I have always a kind of a doubt and misgiving,

when striving to do what little I can for a soldier, as to his deriving any benefit from it. 10thly. I feel that whether I am in the world or not, it is incumbent upon me to be *totally* dead to it. Unless supported by an almost *miraculous* grace, I could not live 'in the world as if I were not in it'—that is to say, I could not go forth into the world to enjoy rationally and in moderation those pleasures in which all my life I have indulged to such an excess as to make even innocent amusements sinful, on account of the sins to which they gave rise, and also on account of my inordinate love for them. You will understand this when I tell you that for twenty-one years I studied nothing but my pleasure and my own will, that I had hardly any fundamental principles to exercise the least restraint upon me, always excepting the principles of my religion, to which I was, alas! so frequently

dead. 11thly. Having served my own slavish will and pleasure so entirely and with my whole heart, it seems only just that I should now serve my God entirely and with my whole heart; and that as I entirely abandoned Him for them in my darkness, so now in the days of my enlightenment I should entirely abandon them for Him.

“And now to show you that I have not been looking at one side of myself, I will tell you the only reasons *contra* that I can discover; and the first is that I am perhaps too young in the spiritual life to take so decided a step; but, on the other hand, has not Almighty God led me step by step, and almost imperceptibly, to my present dispositions? And will He deprive me of the graces He now gives me unless I bring that punishment on myself? 2ndly. I am untried, for excepting for two or three days

every now and then, I hardly know what spiritual aridity means. 3rdly. Shall I be doing more good where I am than in a religious order? I don't know, but I think not, and moreover I do not think it is His Holy Will that I should remain where I am. And these are the only ones I can find. To conclude, my dear Father, the debt of gratitude I owe to our dear Heavenly Father is so great and so overwhelming, that I feel I can do absolutely nothing to repay it. His unspeakable mercy in having called me from my evil ways confounds me, but when in addition He has not ceased to pour upon me the fulness of His blessings and His graces, closing His eyes as it were to all my faults and neglects, and to all my self-love, what is too great a sacrifice for Him? Prompted by these feelings, I wrote to my father ten days ago, and requested his

permission to withdraw from the army, a request he will no doubt accede to.

“I regret to say I was not able to receive Holy Communion on St. Hyacinth’s, as I was on duty, but on the Sunday following I offered up my reception for your entire benefit, and I need hardly say that I never receive without praying for you. The only distraction that troubles me now is my meals. I constantly find myself bothering my head as to what things I will deprive myself of, and have the greatest difficulty in shaking off the thought. I have proposed to myself the following remedy : whenever I am thus disturbed, to impose a penance on myself ; to endeavour to partake of my meals in a spirit of indifference, and seldom to eat things that are not necessary to the maintenance of life and health. Do you approve, or am I giving too much attention to the correction of this fault ? I

strive in like manner to root out all my faults that come to my notice, for I think Almighty God has perhaps granted me this great peace and freedom from strong temptation, that I may wage war the better with my smaller faults and imperfections. I regret to say that I am now out in the camp again, but I hope to come into town very often. One more point on which I solicit direction, and I have done. I am sometimes very uneasy lest by little omissions I should lose *particular* graces ; by this I do not mean constant omissions, but omissions once in the way,—for instance, omitting to go and see a poor person on a particular day, or indulging myself at my meals in some unnecessary gratification, or not paying sufficient attention to an inspiration to do a good act, and hence forgetting to do it. I presume I ought not to take notice of

these omissions, or else to make an act of contrition, and think no more about them. The reason of my being troubled is that I imagine every particle of grace to be something so precious, that no opportunity should be lost to obtain even the smallest fraction of it.

"And now I must finish. With every best wish, and hoping that your change is not disagreeable to you,

"I remain,

"Your affectionate child in Christ,

"HENRY E. DORMER."

"LONDON, C.W.

"Sept. 17th, 1866.

"My dear Father in Christ,

"I fear the letter I wrote you about a fortnight ago must have failed to reach you, unless indeed you have been too much occupied to be able to send me a

reply. I have been waiting from day to day for an answer, and hence what must have seemed to you my unaccountable silence. Pursuant to the resolution I adopted with you the night before you left, I wrote to my father, and requested his permission to send in my papers and leave the army. His reply was, as I expected, a joyful acquiescence, and he advised my coming home at once, and said, 'In no country is the army a very edifying profession, and if you don't like it you can try something else, and if you are inclined to Holy Orders I would advise you to go to Rome, where you might study divinity with the greatest advantage to yourself.' Now as to the first point of his advice, I would never leave the army to engage in any other worldly profession, for most other professions take-up the whole of one's time—

or at least a great part of it ;—and my desire (through Divine grace) is to give all my time to the immediate and direct service of God. As to the second point, the going to Rome, I do not know what to say, and in fact have hardly thought much about it. Sometimes I think it might be God's Holy Will that I should join the Dominican Order in this country ; there is a simplicity about the poorer classes that attracts me. I have almost lost that great aversion I used to have to the free-and-easiness of the inhabitants, and I should gain the merit of sacrificing the joy of ever again seeing my parents and relations for the sake of serving God ; and I really feel that I could make this sacrifice if it were His Holy Will that I should do so. I have received a letter from ———, however, which has considerably shaken me by bringing points before

my mind that did not before strike it. I enclose you these opinions. It is certainly true that I am quite untried. Almighty God in His goodness and compassion for my weakness has not ceased hitherto to make all things easy to me ;—on looking into myself I am bound to confess that the little I do in the service of God I do entirely from inclination : daily I have been expecting in fear and trembling lest the time of spiritual aridity should come, but as yet I am grateful to say it has not arrived."

" September 19th.

"My self-will is, I must confess, very strong. I discover this in the difficulty I have in making during the day any modifications in the plan I lay out for myself during my morning exercise—such as changing the hour of my meals, or being

compelled to perform some unexpected duty which interferes with the performance of my plan for the day. It would seem as if my flesh resigned itself to whatever was proposed to it beforehand, but was ready to rebel against unexpected deviation. I have also experienced the force of it in the great difficulty I have often had in following your directions when they have been at variance with my own feelings: and I must tell you that I often find it almost impossible to moderate my prayers—it seems to me sometimes as if I *must* pray almost all day long, for when I cease I get so bothered with disturbing thoughts that my mind is really undergoing less exertion when I am praying than when I am continually rejecting one thought after another. As you may imagine, I have been thinking very much the last few days on this all-important subject; and the con-

clusion at which I have arrived is this : I can see no really good reason for my remaining in the army ; I have also a strong desire to live under some kind of rule. But on the other hand I do not feel strongly called to the priesthood ; having hitherto served Almighty God, I might say, entirely according to the bent of my inclination, I do not know whether I am capable of making a complete oblation and sacrifice of my will."

"September 22nd.

"It seems as if I never were going to finish this letter, dear father ; before I have done, the hour arrives for the performance of some daily duty, and I am compelled to stop. To continue : I think, after frequent self-examination during the last two or three days, that I am stating the real motive of my desire to enter a religious

order when I say it is that I may attain to greater perfection in myself, to a higher state of virtue, and to a closer and more intimate union with God by removing myself from the obstacles that my present state of life throws in the way of a completely recollected life. Can I safely regard this desire as an indication that Almighty God has blessed me with a true vocation? The fact is, I am in a very unsettled state. One day, I imagine I ought to labour amongst the soldiers whom I have latterly rather given up speaking to: animated with this sentiment, I hurried off yesterday, when in the middle of the Stations of the Cross, to try to induce a young soldier to continue coming to me for instruction, whom I had been teaching in the hospital, but who had never come near me since. (I would not have left the Stations, only I was afraid of missing him.)

I was shocked to find that he had been going to the Protestant Church ; he promised to come over to me within half an hour, but he never arrived. At other times I think of the very few opportunities and occasions I have of doing much good amongst them ;—my only means of access to men out of my own company is when I occasionally meet them, or when they are laid up in hospital. It is certainly a far greater pleasure and satisfaction to myself to visit the poor and the sick, and I feel more at home with them than I do with the soldiers. Unless it be God's Holy Will, I have certainly no desire to remain in the army, and I feel no vocation to labour in it in behalf of the soldiers ; that is to say, I do not see my way to doing any real good amongst them. On the other hand, Almighty God has instilled within me a liking to visit the sick and

poor, and a desire to attain to greater perfection."

"September 24th, 1866.

"My dear Father in Christ,

"I had just completed eight pages of a letter to you, interspersed with many doubts and perplexities, when your most welcome letter arrived this morning. It came like a gleam of sunshine to dispel the clouds of doubt and uncertainty that have lately been obscuring my mind. Your words would have been a sufficient guarantee that it had pleased Almighty God in His boundless goodness to bless even so unworthy an object as I am with the greatest of His blessings—a vocation to His service. But as if to confirm me still more, He deigned this day, when I prostrated myself before Him to return Him thanks for this inestimable benefit,

to fill me with a most intimate sense of union with Him—a sentiment as if a barrier had been removed that had long stood between Him and me; and in offering myself up to Him, He made me feel that I was truly and really doing so. How unspeakable is His goodness! I am astounded when I think of His conferring this on *me*, who have spent my whole life in sinning against Him, and who now serve Him with so many backslidings! What can I ever do in return for such bounties? How can I ever sufficiently deplore having offended Him? I look back on my past life, and I see nothing but the tenderest solicitude for my welfare—a solicitude which my sins do not seem ever to have caused Him to relax even for one instant. And yet during all that time I was almost and wholly unmindful of Him! How true and beautiful was the sentiment (attributed

I believe to a mad person) written on a wall, 'If each grain of sand were a pen, and all the waters of the ocean were ink, it would still be impossible to give any idea of the goodness of God!'"

Thus we see that all his harassing doubts and misgivings were entirely cleared away, and that on the 24th of September he had been able in the fulness of his heart "truly and really" to offer himself and his future life to God, to be exclusively consecrated to His service in holy religion.

It was on the day following that symptoms of indisposition manifested themselves for the first time. On the previous Sunday, indeed, one of his brother officers met him taking his men to church, and, remarking his appearance, told him that he felt sure he was over-

exerting himself, but adds "that he looked indescribably happy, and that his face had a heavenly expression." On Tuesday, the 25th of September, the day after he wrote the above letter to his Director, symptoms of typhoid fever declared themselves; and on Sunday his illness became so serious that one of the elder officers of the regiment, who had at all times shown him the most affectionate kindness, wrote to inform his mother of his state, adding that the complaint had been caught whilst visiting a poor person, and that his medical attendants felt considerable uneasiness about him. During his short illness, which lasted scarcely a week, he made two efforts to write to his father. The first letter, dated September 26th, was found unfinished among his papers, and begins with the happy words, "My doubts are all cleared up, and I now see clearly that it has

pleased Almighty God to bless me with a true vocation."

The other letter was written the day following, and contained the last lines he ever penned. It will be seen how completely his mind was relieved from the perplexities which had until then distressed him; and that the sacrifice of himself, at least in will and purpose, had been made, and we cannot doubt accepted.

"Sept. 27th, 1866.

"My dear Father,

"I can only write a few lines by this mail, as I am laid up with an attack of intermittent fever and rheumatism. The fever has almost subsided, but it has left behind rheumatism in my right knee, in the point of my elbow, and in my little finger. I am also very weak and prostrated, but I trust, please God, I shall

come round again. I have no longer any doubt that it has pleased Almighty God in His great goodness to bless me with a true vocation: a letter I received from my Director a little while ago, and my own feelings, have confirmed me in this decision. What I purpose doing (as it seems to be Almighty God's Will I should do so) is to join the Dominican Order in Rome. I should thus have the benefit of receiving the best of theological instructions, and of living under a rule. Meanwhile, the first thing to be done is to get out of the army, and about this I fear I shall have great difficulty, as there are constant alarms of Fenians, and it is very doubtful whether the Colonel would forward my papers. Still, cost what it may, I must get out of the army soon—whether I have to sacrifice my commission even or not. To remain in the army after

receiving Almighty God's call would be to resist His voice, and might bring upon me a direct punishment. I cannot write more. With fond love,

“I remain your affectionate son,
“HENRY.”

In consequence of the mails being accidentally delayed, the next letters, which conveyed to his family the news of his lamented death, did not reach them until other letters written later had been first received—thus causing them long suspense, and much additional trial. He never rallied from the exhaustion consequent on the fever, but expired at 12.45 on the morning of Tuesday, the 2nd of October. When all hopes of recovery were lost, one of the Dominican fathers, Father H——, who acted as military chaplain, administered the last Sacraments

to him, at which time he was speechless. The particulars of his last moments and holy end will, however, be best gathered from the following letters :—

From Father B——, Superior of the Dominican Fathers at New London, to Lord and Lady Dormer.

“ Louisville, Kentucky,

“ Oct. 13, 1866.

“ My dear Lord and Lady Dormer,

“ I feel that it is a duty incumbent upon me to give you any information in my possession relating to the life of your dear son in London, and particularly relating to his sickness and death. Perhaps no other person was in a position as favourable to this end as myself. I was the first priest whose acquaintance he formed in America, and the last who saw him while reason still remained on earth.

“In all the sincerity of my soul, I believe, my dear Lord and Lady, that you have brought into the world, and reared to manhood, a great saint. His conduct and example among the Catholic people of London, rich and poor, from the time of his arrival until the hour of his death, was an opening of the heavens—it was the appearance of an angelic soul. Imagine not that I exaggerate—I do not, and I cannot come near the reality, no matter what I say. Let those who are children among us be questioned on the subject fifty years hence, and they will say the same. Let the officers and soldiers of his regiment be heard on the subject, and I venture to say that without distinction of class or creed they will agree with me. Let the *multitudes* of the poor and the miserable that wept around his bier be only

remembered by any one present, and the truth of what I have said will not be questioned. His rule of life, which I suppose has been sent to you with his other papers by the good Captain W——, will show what was his daily life in London during the last six months. It will show that he prayed at least four or five hours every day; that even the duties of his profession were sanctified by holy intentions; that, in a word, his whole being was absorbed in Divine love. I am sorry I cannot tell you hundreds of incidents in his life before his sickness. At one time he is seen by the bedside of some miserable old person who has not a friend in the world, trying to comfort and encourage the desponding soul. Again, we find him walking six miles out in the country to see a sick old person; and when the river that had

to be crossed is found to be swollen, he takes off his boots and socks, and goes over barefoot. Now we find him among the brethren of St. Vincent of Paul—the life and soul of that society; and when their Sunday meeting is over, we see him with his class of children, patiently instructing them in Christian doctrine and the rules of a Christian life. His example among the soldiers, especially those of his own faith, and in fact among the whole congregation, has had the most salutary effect.

“Allow me now to give you some particulars relating to his sickness and death. Some of these I know myself, and many of them I have collected from his servant, Peter Lyons, of the regiment, who, although not a Catholic, was as faithful a man to his master as ever lived. He took sick on Tuesday, the 25th of September. In the

morning of that day he told his servant to bring in the doctor. No alarming symptoms except a violent bleeding from the nose, which happened three times during his sickness, appeared until Sunday evening : I may state here, that he had frequently bled from the nose before his sickness, yet he always seemed to enjoy robust health. I saw him for an hour on Friday. He was then perfectly possessed of his reason. He spoke to me about F. M. G——, his former Director, and said that he would like to go to one of our large convents in the United States to make a retreat. This I understood was intended as the initiatory step toward joining our Order : at least I knew that he had that idea in his mind. In the conversation on Friday he told me that he was sorry he did not obey his Director more implicitly in regard to his prayers and austerities, and said that this was

kind yet, but that he would let me know at six o'clock that evening. I asked the doctor would he permit me to procure a good woman as nurse: for I saw that the servant Lyons and the hospital servant were somewhat exhausted. He told me to do so, and I immediately procured the services of a truly Christian woman, Mrs. K——, who is considered the best nurse in the town. At four o'clock I was called away twenty miles. I felt sad all the way, and before going I told the fathers what I thought. Father H—— was with him at six o'clock, and again at half-past ten that night, when he anointed him and gave him the Holy Viaticum. He was only partially conscious from Monday morning until his death on Tuesday morning. But he had been to Communion on the Sunday before his illness, and went often every week.

From Sunday until his death he often sang Catholic hymns, and advised men whom he supposed to be present to stop swearing, drinking, and the like. He spoke frequently of his father, mother, brothers, and sister, and of some of the priests, particularly of F. M'G—— and myself. The good honest soldier, Peter Lyons, his servant, told me all this, and also that in all his delirium there was 'nothing but kindness, peace, and Christianity, and that every word had some tendency to God.'

"My dear Lord and Lady, I will not say much more. Other incidents relating to his death and burial have been given to you, I believe, by Captain W——, to whom poor Henry was sincerely attached, and who acted as a father to him in every respect, and was the first to make known to me on Monday his dangerous condition.

I cannot speak too highly of the respect shown him by Colonel H——, of the regiment, and by all the officers and men under his command. They were all present in church at the funeral. The officers of the 53rd regiment, and of the artillery, were also present. I need hardly tell you that all our Catholic people, and numbers of the most respectable Protestants, were also present. Dr. T—— was unremitting in his attentions during his illness. Poor Mrs. K—— was with him to the last, and when there seemed no hope she wept as if he had been her own son.

“In conclusion, I have to say about myself that though I may be obliged to wander over the broad valley of the Mississippi all my life, and may expect to see much good in men, I never expect to see such a man as was your son. His life

has made an indelible impression on me. I feel an elevation of the soul to God whenever that heavenly form comes upon my mind. God grant that my life and death may be such as his!

“I remain, &c.,

“Fr. S. B——, (O.S.D.)”

It was this good father who pronounced from the altar the funeral oration of the departed. “He eulogized the precious departed,” writes an officer of the regiment, “in appropriate terms. Not one word but was true in every particular. He held dear Henry’s life up as an example to be followed by every one of us. He urged on mothers to pray that their children might walk in his footsteps, and finally expressed his conviction, which was joined in by all present, that if ever a holy man lived

in this world, Henry Dormer was that man."

From the account given by the medical officer in attendance on Mr. Dormer, it would appear that two days before his death he was quite conscious of his danger, and spoke of it with calm collectedness of mind. Another of his fellow-officers who was constantly with him observes that he was only delirious at times. The same officer (a Protestant) with singular kindness went after Mr. Dormer's decease to see some of the poor people whom his friend had been accustomed to visit ; and says they all entreated him to give bits of anything that belonged to their late benefactor, to keep as relics. A Protestant lady connected with one of the officers of the regiment observes that ever since his arrival in London he had spent his time in good works, and that

even when in camp, seven miles distant from London, he used to go into London almost every day rather than neglect his sick poor. "He died," she says, "in the active service of God. He will be dreadfully missed by the poor. He specially sought out the aged men and women who had no children, and were lonely." Another officer writes to his friends, "that he was more like an angel than a man, and that when alive they used to say he was too good for this world." Another who knew him intimately, after speaking of the universal reverence felt for him in the town, adds: "After the Requiem Mass, I went to see the fathers, and they assured me that your son, after attending Mass at 6, generally remained in the church until 10; and that he had discovered a way of leaving the church

after it was closed for the night, and locking the door after him, by some peculiarity of the lock, of which they even were not aware until he showed it to them; so that they said they did not know how long he remained in prayer after the church was closed for the night. I need not tell you that, as a rule, religion is not much regarded in the army, but all his brother officers, Protestants though they are, seem, as indeed they may well have been, *astounded* at his piety: and this without one bitter word or sarcasm; and I cannot but think this the strongest proof of his goodness, that not one should have a single word to fling at him or at his faith. Of the civilians, and of the poor in particular, I might tell you many of the anecdotes related to me by the priests and others. One

poor old woman was seen to kneel by his coffin just before it was lowered into the grave. One old blind man loved him so that he said he could not love any one more. His servant (a Protestant) said that he always knew where to find his master,—either in the chapel or in the hospital. So assured of his salvation did the fathers feel, that they did not even ask for our prayers, and the one who preached declared that in all his experience he had *never* met so good a man. Henry's confessor intends writing to Lord Dormer, and his letter will of course tell you many things more than he told me of his wonderful charity, of the hours he spent in prayer, and many other acts of piety. One of the fathers told me it was quite wonderful what an effect on the congregation (by this I do not mean the soldiers) his

example had had, and this in little more than six months; indeed they declared his life to have been that of a Saint."

The feeling of reverence felt for his memory was not confined to the poor. "Words cannot Describe the depth of my grief," writes his Director, Father M'G——, "when Father B——'s letter brought me the melancholy tidings of his death. My first thought, after the natural feelings of the heart had found vent in tears, which would not be kept back, was to kneel down and ask his intercession before the throne of God, where I felt well assured, from my knowledge of his eminent sanctity, his pure soul must at that moment be."

In another letter addressed to his family he expresses himself as follows:—

" It is simply impossible

for me to give you anything like an adequate idea of the intimate union that existed between God and your son. I feel well assured that for the last four months of his life no three consecutive minutes of any one day during that period found his heart wandering from the presence of God. He never wished to be out of the Divine Presence a single moment, and in order to devote himself exclusively to the service of God, it was, as you are aware, his intention to embrace the religious state. It is not necessary to speak of his great humility, his many well-timed charities to the poor, his zeal in instructing the ignorant and visiting the sick, and his untiring labours for good among the soldiers: for these virtues, and the many other virtues which he practised in an eminent degree, may all be summed

up in the brief but in my opinion well-merited eulogy, '*He was a Saint.*'"

A religious of another order who knew him intimately, after speaking of his profound respect in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, his charity to the poor, and the extraordinary mortification of his life, observes that "in these days we do not often see such an example of charity, humility, and forgetfulness of self: to believe it, we must read the lives of the Saints. Mr. Dormer, a young officer, has shown us what grace can effect in a faithful heart. In his daily life we have seen virtue carried to an heroic degree. . . . How many souls have been drawn to the practice of virtue by his counsels and example! At this moment little pieces of linen worn by him are being distributed, and are kept with veneration

by many as having truly belonged to a Saint!"

"He died as he lived, *a Saint*," writes another father some weeks later. "At his funeral, the tears of the poor and those afflicted by disease spoke his praises more eloquently than any words of rhetoric could have done. His brother officers, the entire military, civilians, and especially the poor, vied with each other to do him homage. His name is still fresh in the memory of the good people of London, and will not fade even after those who knew him shall have passed away. I visited his grave last week, and found it strewn with bunches of flowers, crosses formed of lilies, and other tokens of respect."

Both the Catholic and Protestant papers united in bearing testimony to the common feeling entertained towards him by

the people of London ; and from two of the latter we extract the following notice of the last sad ceremony.

“We regret to announce the untimely demise of the Hon. Henry E. Dormer, Ensign of the 60th Regiment, and son of Lord Dormer, of typhoid fever, at the early age of 22. This amiable and accomplished young nobleman had only been in Canada during the past seven months, having joined his regiment some time after its arrival in Canada. He entered the service in February, 1863. In disposition he was modest and retiring, and in his private life a steadfast adherent of the Roman Catholic faith. His benevolence was of an enlarged character, and most of his leisure was devoted to visiting the afflicted, and in acts of charity and mercy. Indeed, it was while in attendance at the sick bed

of a poor person that he contracted the fatal disorder which ended in his death. Ensign Dormer was much beloved and esteemed, both in the service and in private life, as a man and a Christian. His death has thrown a gloom upon the regiment with which he was connected, and will be deplored by many of those who have been relieved by his charity, and consoled by his sympathetic ministrations.

“The funeral took place on Wednesday, the 3rd inst., at 3 o'clock. About 10 o'clock his remains were conveyed to St. Peter's R. C. Church, where High Mass was performed with the usual solemnities. Father B—— preached a practical sermon on the occasion, in which he eulogized the virtues of the deceased, and called upon the congregation to follow his example of piety and charity. He

claimed that it was perfectly possible for a soldier to be a good Christian and a good soldier at the same time; that our duty to God was the first consideration with us all; and that deceased proved by his walk in life that he was able to discharge the first and nobler duty to his Creator, and yet find time for the full exercise of his profession. He hoped that every mother might daily pray that her children would follow the life and the example set by the deceased in his religious life and acts of charity.

“Several persons in the church were noticed to shed tears while the reverend gentleman recounted the many good and noble qualities with which he was gifted.

“In the afternoon, for some time before the hour announced for the funeral, the church was densely crowded by those of all denominations, civil and military, to

witness the obsequies of the deceased. The coffin was placed in the centre aisle of the church, supported on a bier, and covered with a pall, on which were laid the sword and hat of the deceased. In conformity with the usage of the church, three lighted tapers were placed at the head and three at the foot of the coffin. The altar was draped in mourning, which increased the solemnity of the occasion. Shortly before three o'clock, the funeral cortège commenced to move from the church in the following order :—

Firing Party, 36 men, 60th Rifles, with
arms reversed.

Band of the 60th Rifles.

Band of the 53rd Regiment.
(Playing alternately the Dead March.)

THE BODY,

Drawn on a Gun Carriage with six horses.

Pall Bearers, Officers of the 60th.
Roman Catholic Clergy, in Carriage.
Officers of the 60th Rifles.
Officers of the 53rd Regiment.
Men of the 60th Regiment, with side-arms.
The Horse of the Deceased, led.
Private Carriages.

“A large concourse of citizens of all classes assembled to witness the funeral, and pay the last token of respect to the departed. As the procession moved towards the cemetery, up Richmond Street, the bands of the 60th Rifles and 53rd Regiment played the Dead March in Saul. The solemn and mournful strains of this magnificent dirge, in connection with the slow and measured tread of the military, rendered the occasion one of the most imposing and solemn that has ever taken place.”

The following notice appeared in the Army and Navy Gazette, Oct. 27th:—

“60th Rifles.—We have to record the death of the Hon. Henry E. Dormer, ensign in the 4th battalion, who died on the 2nd instant, at London, Canada West. The gallant officer was the youngest son of Lord and Lady Dormer, and was born November 29, 1844, and entered the service in November, 1863. A letter from London, Canada West, dated October 5th, 1866, thus alludes to this gallant young officer's death:—‘My chief and principal news is of a very sad character; it is to tell you of the death of Henry Dormer—a great loss to the battalion, for he had endeared himself to officers and men by his gentle, unassuming disposition and unselfish character. He was a zealous and earnest Roman Catholic, and employed much of the time he could spare from duty

in visiting the sick and poor, and it was in such ministrations that he caught the fever which has deprived the Rifles of a dear friend and comrade. At first it was not supposed that his illness was of a serious character, but it suddenly assumed a typhoid appearance, and his strength gradually declining, he died very early on Tuesday morning, 2nd October. His funeral took place yesterday, and he was buried with military honours and according to the rites of the Romish Church. A military funeral is always very impressive, and this was especially so, as we "slowly and sadly" buried one so much loved, so young, and so suddenly cut off. His own regiment furnished the firing party of thirty-six men and his pall-bearers, and the bands of the 60th and 53rd played alternately the Dead March in Saul; and the two regiments following the coffin to

the cemetery were accompanied by a large number of the clergy and citizens of London, desirous of testifying their respect to the deceased officer.'"

"It was such a glorious autumn day," writes an eye-witness, "and the Canadian forests a blaze of colour—vermilion, gamboge, and sepia;—such a beautiful, hopeful day to be buried." We may add that it was a beautiful, hopeful day on which to die—the feast of the Guardian Angels, a feast held in special devotion by the Dominican Order, and falling within the Octave of the Holy Rosary, which that Order (to which the deceased in heart and intention had already united himself) celebrates all over the world with extraordinary solemnity.

No token of respect and affection that could be given, whether on the part of

his brother officers, or the Catholic poor of London, was wanting to mark the value in which his memory was, and still is, cherished by those who knew him. Letters recently received from America testify to the continued marks of affection evinced towards his memory, the frequent visits to his grave paid by the poor, and the solicitude they show to cover it with flowers and other ornaments. The officers of his regiment have united to raise a memorial tablet in England; and have on all occasions expressed an esteem and reverence for his virtues and holy example, most honourable not only to him, but to themselves. Even at Winchester, we are assured that the soldiers preserve his memory with respect, and are still fond of recalling the period he spent among them there.

A white marble cross marks his grave,

and a tablet is placed in that church where he spent so many happy hours.

Another Father, who had been Mr. Dormer's confessor in the absence of Father M'G——, writes in November, 1867, after reading the "Memoir," from London, C.W.:—

"When the Honourable Henry Dormer arrived here, it was in the beginning of Lent. His first act was to call at the priest's house to ascertain the Lenten regulations, and to engage a convenient time for confession. The Fathers were all struck with admiration at his bearing and appearance. It was my lot to have charge of the Sacristy, in which capacity I had often every day the opportunity of witnessing his fervent devotions. He came before the earliest Mass, and remained until after the latest. Sometimes he would serve at the altar. His daily

routine has been considerably portrayed in the 'Memoir,' but. there was a great deal of his life that was hidden with Christ in God. The occurrences with which his sojourn here was daily fraught must be condensed in the expression that, after religious and military duties, he went about doing good. He constantly sought out the afflicted, that he might solace and relieve them. . . . His memory is here in benediction."

Henry Dormer had not completed his twenty-second year at the time of his death. His life had therefore been very short, if we reckon by years; and his death, if we were to speak in the language of the world, would be called sudden and untimely. Those who had watched the rapid growth of his soul in the spiritual life were aware that he possessed talents and qualities which, had

he survived to enter the ecclesiastical state, would eminently have fitted him for guiding others also in the path of sanctity. They could not, therefore, but feel profound regret, not only at the personal loss of one so deservedly beloved, but at the failure of those hopes and anticipations which had been confidently indulged that he might live to render much glory to God, and to labour long in the habit of religion, for the salvation of souls. But the thoughts of God are not as our thoughts; and the time was come for Him "to call" His servant "to Himself." And possibly the example of his holy life, led in a position most open to worldly temptations, and the thought of his virtues, embalmed with the touching circumstances of his early death, may be intended to sink more deeply into the hearts of those who cherish

his memory, than the most eloquent sermons or the most fervent exhortations would have done. For we know that "venerable old age is not that of long time, neither is it counted by the number of years : but the understanding of a man is grey hairs, and a spotless life is old age. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. . . . Being made perfect, in a short space he fulfilled a long time ; for his soul pleased God : therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities."*

* Wisdom iv. 8, 10, 13, 14.

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